

DESIGN PROCESS AND SUITABILITY: UTZON'S COURTYARD HOUSES

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ABSTRACT

An emerging issue in the actual debate on *architectural social sustainability*, is the *suitability* of an architectural project. *Action theory* has shown how the capacity of adjustment and therefore for suitability of an action is linked to the way operator understands what happens in a situation and how the conceptual framework of the design process can be adapted to this dynamic understanding. "*When and how does an architectural project suit to his context?*", "*What can be the role of the architect in this process?*" and "*What is the nature of the link between author and user when the latter actually experiences the building?*" are the main interrogations that this paper will contribute to explore and to deepen.

In 1953 Jørn Utzon and Ib Møgelvang worked together for an architectural ideas-competition called "Private Life". They won the first prize with a proposal of nonhierarchical assembly of courtyard houses. Subsequently Jørn Utzon conceived several projects based on the competition idea and actually built two of them: a 60 houses complex in Helsingør and a 63 houses complex in Fredensborg. From a detailed paradigmatic idea different projects were realized, taking the *field conditions* into account. Each has its own definition of the relations between individuals, community, society and nature. This deployment of several building strategies coming from one initial concept will be used as a paradigm to investigate the notion of suitability through design process and afterlife of the built object. The courtyard houses projects will be compared to several contemporary practices.